

Shakespearean Repertoire and Spectacular Production of "Pinafore" Chief Ingredients of Theatrical Menu.

By JULIA CHANDLER MANZ.

Now don't you see that it can't be done? There isn't a producer in captivity who can afford to offer a high-class entertainment at reduced prices.

When a theater announces a first-grade attraction and in the same breath shouts "popular prices," just put it down, that as sure as two and two are four, there is a nigger in the woodpile, for the present cost of producing a worthwhile drama at the hands of capable players is such as to make the maintenance of the current scale of prices in the "legitimate" houses a necessity to the producer unless he is going to lose money.

If my opinion in this matter was confirmed before it was doubly fixed last week by the first presentation in this city of "The Story of the Rosary." Announcements preceding Walter Howard's melodrama claimed a stupendous production of a meritorious piece at the hands of gifted players. From the same source as this claim for the play came the offer of seats at popular prices which instantly shut one up to the conclusion that something was wrong somewhere, nor did it take more than the first act of the melodrama at the Belasco last Monday evening to bring one to a solution of the problem, for viewed from every logical angle, "The Story of the Rosary" is a slapstick melodrama, written around a hackneyed theme, and introducing a group of impossible characters which are presented, in the main, with such persistent lack of color that even the popular prices asked of the public to see it are exorbitant.

Yet Mr. Howard, who is responsible for both the play and its staging, asserts that four companies are successfully presenting the piece in England, which is certainly no flattering commentary on British taste and intelligence.

The current dramatic year has been distinguished by a dearth of Shakespearean productions. William Faversham deserted the Bard of Avon at the end of his season's presentation of his expensive production of "Julius Caesar." Margaret Anglin's artistic offerings of classic drama last season were a financial failure. Both the Southern and Northern companies, upon whom we have formed the habit of depending for the highest artistry in the classic drama, being absent from the boards at present still further cuts down the list of Shakespearean offerings this year, so that the repertoire of the plays of Shakespeare, and the production of "Louis XI," which is the work of the French dramatist, Casimir Delavigne, which Robert B. Mantell will present at the Belasco Theater this week, will likely be our sole chance during the present season of enjoying Shakespearean drama.

The most elaborate and conspicuous of the Mantell revivals this season is "King John," which will be the offering tomorrow evening and again on Friday, this being one of Shakespeare's great military pageants which is seldom produced because to do so entails an enormous amount of work and expense. King John has not been seen on the local stage since the days of Junius Brutus Booth and Charles Keen—more than twenty-five years ago.

Mrs. Modjeska produced the military spectacle for a short time, but the dominating, however, the role of King John to that of Lady Constance, a clear dramatic perversion and one which destroyed the dramatic balance of the piece.

King John is known as the "magna charter" monster of the twelfth century. He was superstitious, cruel, and oppressive—physically brave, but morally a coward—and yet with it all a man of great natural ability. He ruled in stormy times, when the first crack in the feudal system was only beginning to appear. Bruce forced ruled the world and John was brute force enthroned. In his book on Shakespeare, William Winter, dean of American dramatic critics, places Mr. Mantell's portrayal of King John as one of the foremost characterizations of the American stage.

Another fascinating character of the Mantell repertoire (which will be seen but once during his week here) is his "Louis XI," that crafty old French monarch who set about destroying the feudal system of France and cementing the various duchies into a single grand empire. Louis is one of the celebrated figures of history and, while not as familiar to play-goers as some of the great figures in a classical repertoire, is peculiarly Mantellian in scope and said to be one of the tragedian's finest characterizations.

The slogan at the New National Theater this week would seem to be "a real ship in real water," for this is the big feature of the revival of "Pinafore," which is the first of the New York Hippodrome productions to come here intact, for the reason that there has been no local stage big enough to accommodate them, until in making the revival of the Gilbert and Sullivan opera—Arthur Voegtlin overcame many of the scenic difficulties of the past and designed the present production so that it might be presented.

CALENDAR OF THE WEEK.

Belasco—Robert B. Mantell, in Shakespearean repertoire.
National—N. Y. Hippodrome production of "Pinafore."
Columbia—Dark.
Polka—"A Woman's Way."
Keith's—Vaudeville.
Gayety—"The Golden Crooks."
Cosmos—Vaudeville.
Crescent—Vaudeville.

THE CURRENT WEEK.

Belasco—Robert B. Mantell. Robert B. Mantell will open his engagement at the Belasco Theater tomorrow night in a play in which he has never before appeared in Washington, Shakespeare's historical tragedy, "King John." The other plays in Mr. Mantell's Washington repertoire are "Hamlet," Tuesday night; "Romeo and Juliet," Wednesday afternoon; "Louis XI," Wednesday night; "King Lear," Thursday night; "The Merchant of Venice," Saturday afternoon; and "Macbeth," Saturday night. All are Shakespearean with the exception of

ed in a few of our cities where the dimensions of stages are large. The stupendous affair comes to the National this week instead of to the Belasco, through an interchange of courtesies between the Messrs. Shubert, who are responsible for the production, and Mr. William Rapley, manager of the National Theater.

The Hippodrome revival was made on the 8th of last April, under the direction of Arthur Voegtlin, who is the presiding genius of this, the world's largest playhouse, and in designing it he is said to have outdone himself in all the big Hippodrome spectacles, he has supervised.

The great ship Pinafore, which created a sensation when first seen floating in its basin of water which occupies the entire stage, will be seen at the National this week just as it was at the Hippodrome, or so it is promised.

In a little chat last Wednesday evening with Mr. Fred Berger, the genial manager of the Columbia Theater, I had the present status of the theater brought home to me very forcibly, for Mr. Berger had just returned from New York, where he had been to see what might be procured in the way of amusements for the Columbia this week in substitution for a production recalled to New York before reaching us.

"Conditions in New York are deplorable," he told me. "There are plenty of attractions available, but none of them desirable. There is a great dearth of meritorious plays. Many of the New York houses are kept open at present with inferior plays, because little else is to be had, and every day there is an influx of companies recalled from the road because the public is supporting their appearance on tour."

And Mr. Berger stated that, rather than book a production below the Columbia standard, the Messrs. Metzger prefer to close the house for the current week, except, of course, for the Burton Holmes travelogues, which will occupy the F street playhouse this evening and again tomorrow afternoon.

Izetta Jewel has been spending a week on a motor trip through Virginia. Sidney M. Hirsch, the gifted young author of the vaudeville sketch in which she appeared here the week before last, is in New York arranging for further bookings for "The Passion Play of Washington Square." When this is accomplished Miss Jewel will resume her work as the star of the rapid-fire little production.

"King John" will be the opening bill and will be repeated Friday night. The other plays in Mr. Mantell's Washington repertoire are "Hamlet," Tuesday night; "Romeo and Juliet," Wednesday afternoon; "Louis XI," Wednesday night; "King Lear," Thursday night; "The Merchant of Venice," Saturday afternoon; and "Macbeth," Saturday night. All are Shakespearean with the exception of

enormous tank will cover practically the entire stage, and it will be flooded with three feet of water. On this water will float a ship which will be a reproduction of the old English frigate. On the water will also float a dozen row boats manned by sailors and carrying the characters from the shore to the ship. A company of nearly 200 singers will people the scene. The details of the production have been personally supervised by Arthur Voegtlin, the sponsor of the revival. He it was who designed the entire production, and he it was who decided that when it went on tour it should go on as an exact duplicate of the original or not at all.

The principal roles are to be sung by a cast possessing a grand opera training. The Josephine will be Ruby Cutter Savage, formerly of the Boston Opera Company, and Elise Maryette, who has sung



BABE LA-TOUR, GAYETY



LILLIAN KEMBLE, POLI'S



GENEVIEVE HAMPER, leading woman with Mantell, BELASCO



HOUDINI, KEITH'S



ETHEL MANTELL, BELASCO

SCENE FROM N.Y. HIPPODROME PRODUCTION OF "PINAFORE" NATIONAL

in grand opera in Italy, will be the alternate. The Hebe will be Natalie Ewald, and the little Buttercup will be Marie Horgan. The Capt. Corcoran will be Bertram Poole, last season one of the principal barytones with the Century Opera Company of New York; the boat-spy will be E. Percy Parsons, long a member of the Savage force; the Ralph Rackstraw will be Vernon Dullart, last season with the Century Opera Company; the Sir Joseph Porter will be Herbert Salinger, and the Dick Deadeye will be Albert Hart, well known for his impersonation of the Hopper roles in "Wang" and "El Capitán."

"A Woman's Way," the Thompson Buchanan comedy in which Grace George achieved success, will be the offering of the old English frigate. This play, written with sparkling epigrammatic dialogue, relates the domestic romance of Mr. and Mrs. Alan Waldron. Waldron has been having a quiet flirtation with the beautiful Mrs. Verney, a rather dashing widow. The story of his infatuation breaks out after an automobile accident in which Waldron injures his arm. The newspapers learn of the accident and a big society scandal seems impending. It is only the cleverness of Mrs. Waldron in outwitting the reporters that saves the family.

But Mrs. Waldron is determined that she will not share her husband's affections with any other woman. If Waldron is worth having he is worth fighting for, and she begins her campaign. She invites the handsome widow to the Waldron country place, and there, amidst her husband to draw comparisons between his wife and the new flapper. The little wife handles every situation with

finesse and succeeds in making Waldron so jealous by reviving a flirtation of her own that by the beginning of the last act the audience is beginning to tremble for the happiness of the poor old "backslider" husband who is fearful that he will lose the "one woman in all the world"—his wife. Needless to say, he does not lose her, and all ends well.

In the Grace George role Lillian Kemble should enhance the highly favorable impression which she made upon Poli patrons during her first week in Washington, and Charles Mackay will have a thoroughly congenial part as the husband.

Keith's—Vaudeville. Houdini. "The man who has baffled the world," in his sensational escapes from confinement of all sorts, will be the leading feature this week at the B. F. Keith Theater, where he will present his latest feat, "The Chinese Water Torture Cell," and other self-liberation feats. He will change his bill daily. Houdini has abandoned handcuff escapes, but will probably do some packing box breakouts. Since here some years ago he has been thrice around the world. Other stellar features forming the bill will be Bessie Wynne, Bert French and Alice Ella, Laddie Cuff, Fred Ardath and company, Frank Whitman, Madden and Fitzpatrick, Lupeta Pava, the pipe organ recitals, and the Hearst-Selig news pictorial.

Today the concerts will offer as attractions Ethel Barrymore, Charles Dalton and company, Conroy and Le Maire, Cecilia Wright, the Courtney sisters, Mrs. Gordon, Wilde, Sylvia Loyal and company, Parillo and Pralio, Angie Welner and Phil Masse, and the other customary special offerings.

Continued on page nine.